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Summary

The foodways approach to archaeobotanical investigation is used in this dissertation for reconstructing lost or forgotten lifeways. Food is a social lubricant that deeply engages with identity. As such, understanding culinary practices contributes towards inferring elements of group identity. The deep history of the Greater Caribbean is rich with culinary practices. Through different forms of plant management, the foundations for diverse and distinct culinary practices were created that the Europeans started to exploit in 1492 and afterwards spread across the world. In this research, microbotanical residues (starches) were recovered from different types of presumed plant-related artifacts excavated in three geographic regions: the northwestern Dominican Republic, the Bahama archipelago, and central Nicaragua. Four case studies from five archaeological sites were examined. The first case study is a residue analysis of shell and limestone artifacts from the archaeological site LN-101 (cal. 1088 ± 68 CE) on Long Island, Commonwealth of The Bahamas. This case study contributes the first examination of limestone tools and the first certain identification of manioc (cassava) in the Bahama archipelago. The second case study is a starch analysis of shell artifact samples from three archaeological sites: El Flaco (cal. 1309 ± 81 CE) and La Luperona (cal. 1352 ± 60 CE) in the northwestern Dominican Republic, and Palmetto Junction (cal. 1391 ± 41 CE) on Providenciales, Turks & Caicos Islands. This case study provides additional evidence for the use of exogenous plants in the northern Caribbean and recognizes culinary practices according to which certain plants were pre-cooked before being processed further using bivalve shells. In the third case study, the recovered material remains derived from the same sites, but the artifacts represent fired clay griddles. This case study provides the first evidence of manioc being prepared on such griddles in the insular Caribbean. The fourth case study expands the scope of this dissertation to mainland Nicaragua. From unique finds of pottery griddle fragments at The Barillas site (cal. 1261 ± 37 CE) in central Nicaragua, it challenges preconceived views of ancient foodways in the region. These results invalidate the preconception that griddles were tools used exclusively for the production of maize *tortillas* in pre-Hispanic Central America, which helps explicate associations drawn between ethnic identities and culinary practices. Overall, this dissertation creates a more refined insight into how starchy culinary practices varied in the Greater Caribbean prior to the advent of European invasions.

